

Gary E Waterhouse  
Vietnam War Veteran  
Tuesday, February 28, 2012  
Select Committee on Veterans Affairs Public Hearing

**SUPPORT- S.B. No. 115 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM.**

I cannot conceive of a reasonable legal theory that would oppose providing confidentiality for disclosures made by military personnel who are victims of sexual assault to military sexual assault advocates. The recent trend of protecting the confidential communications between sexual assault counselors and sexual assault victims is a step forward in promoting victim recovery and expanding the scope of a rape victim's rights. Similar to the more well-known evidentiary privileges between psychotherapists and patients, husbands and wives, and clergy members and penitents, a majority of state legislatures has, in recent years, enacted legislation privileging the communication between rape crisis counselors and sexual assault victims transmitted during the course of the counseling relationship. Keeping such information confidential allows for the development of a trustful and healing relationship between a sexual assault victim and her counselor and cultivates the type of connection necessary for recovery to occur. While many state legislatures have recognized the need to foster the victim counseling relationship by enacting privilege statutes, the scope of the privilege varies widely between states.

**SUPPORT- S.B. No. 198 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS.**

I strongly support this bill and the protection it will offer to the structures erected in our communities to commemorate our military history. War Monuments are a vital part of this country's heritage. Veterans see military service memorials as visualizations that the community validates veteran's commitment to Duty, Honor and Country. Carved on them are the names of men and women who were killed beside you. "They died for their country, and now even their names are being destroyed by thieves, just grabbing them to make some money from scrap metal.

**SUPPORT- H.B. No. 5298 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LIST OF PREFERRED VETERANS' CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS.**

Stated simply the veterans' community is embarrassed by the scam artists and hucksters misleading generous people into giving their hard earned money to veteran causes that is diverted into the scammer pockets. The First Amendment notwithstanding, the public should be protected from scam artists and honest veterans causes identified as recognized as established Veteran service organizations.

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Good afternoon Chairman Leone, Chairman Hennessey and distinguished members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs, my name is Gary E Waterhouse, I am a proud Vietnam Veteran, I served with "H" Company Ranger, 75th Infantry Airborne assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, and I am pleased to offer testimony this morning supporting legislation that is good for veterans.

**SUPPORT- S.B. No. 114 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PRETRIAL DIVISIONARY PROGRAMS.**

VA's National Center for PTSD reports that PTSD symptoms can indirectly lead to criminal behavior (for example, self-medication or acts related to hypervigilance) or through direct linkage of a traumatic incident to a specific crime (VHA National Center for PTSD: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>). A 2008 RAND Corporation study found that nearly 20 percent of Service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan (300,000 at the time of the study) reported symptoms of PTSD or major depression, with only slightly more than half having sought treatment.

Treatment-focused court programs, including Veteran-specific dockets, are increasingly prevalent. A growing number of communities have established treatment courts, including Veterans, Drug and Mental Health Courts; these courts address the issues of defendants with specific needs or circumstances not adequately handled in the traditional court system. Veterans' Courts are the latest result of the treatment court movement; they aim to connect Veteran defendants with needed mental health, substance abuse, and other services in a Veteran-focused environment designed to provide support and encourage adherence to treatment.

The Connecticut VJO program is the federal Veteran's jail diversion program designed to provide outreach services to eligible Veterans who are involved with the criminal justice system. Justice involved Veterans can be at risk for homelessness and struggling with issues of substance abuse, mental illness and/or physical health problems. The goal of the program is to provide the consultation necessary to facilitate access to VA services by providing the court with a treatment plan that could be used as an alternative to incarceration. The federal programs in GA-23 New Haven Superior Court and GA-4 Waterbury Superior Court have been successful in the eyes of the veteran community.

Although the judicial branch has consistently opposed legislation that requires the creation of special courts or dockets because it takes away resources available to handle all of their other cases, we believe the members of our armed forces have earned the additional resources after ten (10) years of war.